NECRONOMICON





MESSNER-LOEBS · RITCHIE



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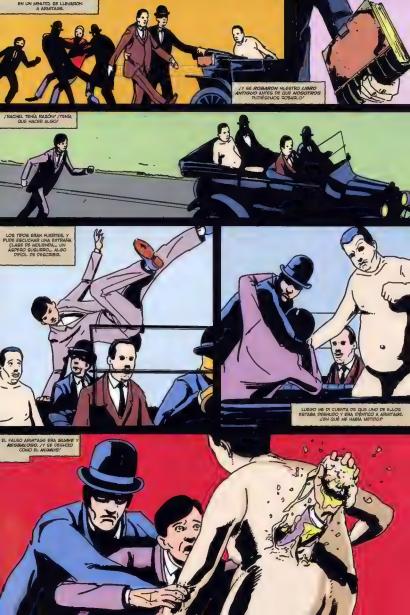
























TICK...TICK...TICK...

I touched briefly upon this bit of story-writing advice in a previous column, but I've been wanting to circle back around to it and go into greater detail, because it's not something I hear discussed much:

Everybody wants something. Or, to put it another way, characters are not furniture.

I know, I know. I just lost you. "Characters want furniture?" No. Characters need to do more than just stand around like furniture, especially in comics, where storytelling space is at a premium. If they exist solely to move the plot along, they will stand out, and not in a good way—in a kindey-shaped coffee-table sort of way. It's an easy mistake to make: "Hey, I need some way to fill the readers in on my bad guy's background. I know! I'll have the cop at the crime scene talk about his childhood. Or maybe a psychiatrist."

Or "I need to show what a twisted badass the killer is. I'll put a gym teacher in here for him to kill." Congratulations. You've just built furniture. Furniture that solves your plot-and-exposition problems, yes, but unless you make these people into genume characters instead of plot conveniences, you're being lazy.

You can turn your wooden puppets into real boys and girls by giving them quirks. You could, for instance, have your crime-scene cop munching peanuts. You could give the gym teacher a stutter or awful taste in clothing (even for a gym teacher). That's one way of going about it. But it's the cheap and obvious way.

The better way is to, as you write, always keep in the back of your mind that—just like in real life—everyone present wants something. Even the admissions nurse who has no dialogue

wants something-he wants to go home early because he's tired, or he wants time off for his kid's soccer game, or he wants to ask the cute intern out, or he wants his nylon shirt to stop itching so much. That desire doesn't necessarily have to be voiced or even obvious, and it doesn't even have to be a story point, but being aware of what your characters long for gives them weight in a scene and is a subtle but more organic way of making them feel real. Having a petite woman light up a big, smelly cigar is an arbitrary way of making her colorful. On the other hand, deciding for yourself that what she wants at that moment is to feel aggressive and empowered, and so she lights up...same visual, much better character. Her quirk has purpose, she has a little depth, and that's going to be

evident in everything about her.

Next: There are no newsstands.

- Mark Waid, E-I-C

UPCOMING





















Q&A WITH CREATOR OF THE MONTH

You're BOOM!'s premier colorist, Andrew. How did you get hooked up with BOOM! Studios?

Chris Sotomayor, a great friend, recommended me. I owe it to him more than anything else, for sure. Mr. Waid contacted me after his referral. I tried out on SALEM, and the rest, as they say, is history. Love working with BOOM!

What's your favorite part of the gig?

Working on different themes and genres of books and bringing my own personal flavor to them. Again, it's great to work with these guys; I can't stress that enough. What are your current coloring projects?

SALEM, SCREAM QUEEN, HIGH ROLLERS, CHAL-LENGER DEEP, and hopefully FARSCAPE.

How did you learn to do what you do?

Art school was a big help, and coloring hundreds of pages doesn't hurt either. I more or less learned the theory behind comics coloring in school, but overall techniques and style weep picked up over the years.

What's the best thing about working with BOOM! Studios?



Working with Mark Waid. Always been a huge fan of his, and to talk with the guy (much less know him and work with him constantly on monthly projects) is an absolute treat. Oh, and hopefully working on FARSCAPE!



ANDREW DALHOUSE